

28. The method of claim 26 wherein the toner is electrostatically printed onto the thermoplastic material.

29. The method of claim 26 wherein the thermoplastic material is heat-softened in the material reactive state.

30. The method of claim 26 wherein the thermoplastic material is brought to the material reactive state by thermal energy.

31. The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of bringing the toner into a toner reactive state.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein the toner and thermoplastic material are fluid in their respective reactive states.

33. The method of claim 31 wherein the toner is heated by the thermoplastic material upon contact with the thermoplastic material to reach the toner reactive state.

34. The method of claim 31 wherein the toner is heated to the toner reactive state and the thermoplastic material is brought to the material reactive state through contact with the toner.

35. The method of claim 26 wherein the thermoplastic material is hardened by cooling the thermoplastic material and the toner.

36. The method of claim 26 wherein the thermoplastic material has a surface on which the toner is printed and the toner sinks into the surface to form a smooth surface structure.

37. The method of claim 26 wherein the thermoplastic material has a surface on which the toner is printed and the thermoplastic toner particles are of the same thermoplastic material as the surface.

38. The method of claim 26 wherein the thermoplastic material has a surface on which the toner is printed, the method further comprising the steps of:

- processing the thermoplastic material in a heated molding machine;
- applying heat to at least the surface of the thermoplastic material to produce the reactive state;
- maintaining at least the surface of the thermoplastic material in the reactive state; and
- printing the toner onto the surface.

39. A method of printing on a thermoplastic material comprising the steps of:

- heating a toner comprised of a coloring agent and thermoplastic toner particles to a toner reactive state;
- heating the thermoplastic material to a material reactive state;
- electrographically printing the toner onto the thermoplastic material; and
- hardening the thermoplastic material thereby establishing a bond between the toner and the thermoplastic material.

40. The method of claim 39 wherein the toner is heated by contact with the thermoplastic material.

41. The method of claim 39 wherein the thermoplastic material is heated by contact with the toner.

42. The method of claim 39 wherein the thermoplastic toner particles and the thermoplastic material are of the same material.

43. A method of printing on a thermoplastic material comprising the steps of:

- heating the thermoplastic material to a material reactive state;
- electrographically printing a toner onto the thermoplastic material such that the toner is heated by the thermoplastic material and reaches a toner reactive state; and
- hardening the thermoplastic material thereby establishing a bond between the toner and the thermoplastic material.

44. The method of claim 43 wherein the toner is comprised of a coloring agent and thermoplastic toner particles.

45. The method of claim 43 wherein the toner and the thermoplastic material, when in their respective reactive states, react with one another to establish the bond.

Remarks

The Office Action and prior art have been reviewed with care in preparing for this amendment and response. The Applicants appreciate the attention of the Examiner to the application.

It is first noted that the Examiner has stated that the requirements of 37 CFR 1.63(c) have not been complied with since the declaration is inconsistent with the Request for corrected filing receipt of November 9, 2000. It is assumed that the inconsistency the Examiner refers to is the application number. The proper priority number is DE 199 42 055.6-45 and filing date is 03/09/99, as stated on the declaration. The file receipt should read the same. Please amend the file receipt accordingly.

Claims 14, 15, 21 and 23 were objected to due to various informalities. These claims were canceled and such informalities were avoided in the new claims. Claims 11, 14, 16, 18, 21-22, 24 and 25 were rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicants regard as the invention. These claims were also canceled.

Claims 11-17, 20-21 and 23-25 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kuehnle et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,510,225) in view of GB 1,264,494.